

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 2-KS-7-07-04

Issued at: Homer, Monday, June 21, 2004

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m., Saturday, June 26, 2004

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m., Monday, June 28, 2004, unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order opens the Anchor River to fishing for king salmon on June 26 through June 28 from its mouth upstream to the Department marker located approximately 600 feet downstream of the confluence of the North and South forks of the Anchor River. The daily bag and possession limit for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length is one per day/ one in possession. For king salmon under 20 inches in length, the daily bag and possession limit is 10 per day/10 in possession. The annual limit of 5 king salmon 20" or longer for Cook Inlet remains in effect and harvested king salmon 20 inches or greater in length must be immediately recorded on the back of the sport fishing license or harvest record card. No more than two king salmon 20 inches or longer may be taken from the Anchor River and Deep Creek combined in one year. After taking a king salmon 20 inches or more in length from the Anchor River, a person may not fish for any species on the same day in the Anchor River. This emergency order is effective 12:01 a.m., Saturday, June 26, 2004, through 11:59 p.m. June 28, 2004.

REGULATION:

The provisions of 5 AAC 56.022 WATERS; SEASONS; BAG, POSSESSION, AND SIZE LIMITS; AND SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR THE KENAI PENINSULA AREA (EXCLUDING THE KENAI RIVER DRAINAGE). (b)(2)(C) and (b)(2)(E) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective:

5 AAC 56.022 WATERS; SEASONS; BAG, POSSESSION, AND SIZE LIMITS; AND SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR THE KENAI PENINSULA AREA (EXCLUDING THE KENAI RIVER DRAINAGE).

- (b)(2) in the Anchor River drainage, except the Bridge Creek reservoir,
- (C) from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 600 feet downstream of the confluence of the North and South forks, sport fishing is open from 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 26 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, June 28, and from July 1 through December 31;
- (E) sport fishing is open for king salmon 20 inches or greater in length from its mouth upstream to ADF&G regulatory markers located approximately 600 feet downstream of the confluence of the North and South forks only from 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 26 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, June 28; bag and possession limit of one fish; a person may not retain more than two king salmon 20 inches or greater in length each year from the Anchor River and Deep Creek combined; a person who takes and retains a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length may not sport fish in the Anchor River drainage for the rest of the day; a king salmon 20 inches or greater in length that is removed from the water must be retained and becomes a part

of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it; a person may not remove a king salmon from the water before releasing the fish;

Kevin C. Duffy,
Commissioner



By delegation to:

Nicole J. Szarzi
Area Management Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

Approximately 7,000 upstream migrating king salmon were counted with the sonar unit operated upstream of the fishery in the mainstem Anchor River in 2004 between May 15, when the sonar was operational, through June 8, when the sonar unit was replaced with a fish weir. The weir count as of June 16 is over 2,000 king salmon. The total upstream count of king salmon is therefore over 10,500 as of June 21. Daily weir counts are approximately 100 king salmon, and are expected to remain at or near the current migration rate through the remainder of June, based upon daily migration rates enumerated by sonar in 2003. The annual harvest estimate for 2002 and 2003, when the Anchor River was open to king salmon fishing for four 3-day weekends, was approximately 1,000 king salmon each year. The king harvest from the Anchor River for the four regulatory 3-day openings in 2004 is likely near this level, therefore the instream exploitation rate of king salmon in 2004 is expected to be approximately 10 percent. This level is well below sustainable exploitation rates for king salmon; therefore, liberalization of the fishery is justified.

The average annual instream harvest of king salmon during each of the most recent 5 years from 1997 through 2001, when the Anchor River was open five weekends, was 1,275, and did not exceed 2,000 king salmon. The 2004 king salmon harvest is not expected to exceed recent historic annual harvests with the addition of a fifth 3-day weekend. Based on the recent historic harvests, the passage rates of king salmon past the sonar in 2003, and the 2004 counts of upstream migrating king salmon, this year's exploitation rate of king salmon in the Anchor River is likely to be less than 20% with the addition of a 3-day opening. This exploitation rate is well within sustainable harvest levels for king salmon in fisheries in Alaska. It is therefore justified to open the Anchor River to an additional 3-day weekend of fishing for king salmon.

The Anchor River was designated a stock of management concern by the Board of Fisheries in 2001. The designation was based upon aerial survey counts below the sustainable goal range of 750 to 1,500 king salmon in four of the six years ending in 2001. In addition to the stock of concern designation, the Board reduced the king salmon fishery on the Anchor River from five to four 3-day weekends, effective in 2002. New sonar technology allowed the department to enumerate the total king salmon escapement for the first time in 2003. The escapement was enumerated by sonar from May 30 through July 9 of that year and approximately 8,700 upstream migrating kings were counted. Based upon the sonar and weir counts of king salmon during 2003 and 2004, the department will recommend that the Board of Fisheries withdraw the Anchor River king salmon from stock of concern status at the Fall 2004 meeting. The department will support restoration of a fifth 3-day opening for king salmon on the Anchor River. A combination of sonar and weir counts will be used to manage the salmon fisheries in the Anchor River. Aerial surveys will likely be discontinued after their relationship to the sonar and weir data is understood.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region 2 Office of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, (907) 267-2218.